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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Letter dated 29 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, on behalf of the current Chairman of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the report of the Committee's twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held from 13 to 15 May 2008 in Luanda, Republic of Angola (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 92 (f), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ismael Abraão **Gaspar Martins**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/63/50.

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Annex to the letter dated 29 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa on its twenty-seventh ministerial meeting

Luanda, 15 May 2008

Introduction

1. The twenty-seventh ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Luanda, Republic of Angola, from 13 to 15 May 2008.

2. The following member States participated in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gabonese Republic, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and the Republic of Chad.

3. The secretariat of the Committee was comprised of members of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. The following entities participated as observers: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (UNCHRD-CA), Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (RECSA), and International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF).

4. The opening and closing statements were delivered by Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola.

5. The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs;
- A message from the Secretary-General of ECCAS, read out by Mr. Antonio Egidio de Sousa Santos, Under-Secretary-General for Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.

Summary of proceedings

I. Adoption of the agenda

6. The meeting at which the agenda was adopted was chaired by Mr. Henri Eyebé Ayissi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, in his capacity as outgoing Bureau Chairman.

7. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee:
   (i) Burundi;
   (ii) Central African Republic;
   (iii) Republic of Chad, along with the report on the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise;
   (iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo.
5. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa:
   (i) Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and disarmament of civilian populations;
   (ii) Briefing by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs: implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative; preparations for the 2008 biennial meeting on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; Regional Workshop to Support the Implementation of the International Tracing Instrument (Nairobi, 10-11 December 2007); United Nations Workshop on Implementing Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa (Gaborone, 27-28 November 2007).
6. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms (status of ratification of the protocol on the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa).
7. Report on the activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.
8. Date of the next meeting.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.

II. Election of the Bureau

8. Mr. Henri Eyebé Ayissi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, chaired the meeting at which the incoming Bureau was elected, in his capacity as outgoing Bureau Chairman.

9. The Committee elected a Bureau comprised of the following countries:

- Chairman: Republic of Angola
- First Vice-Chairman: Gabonese Republic
- Second Vice-Chairman: Republic of Chad
- Rapporteur: Central African Republic.

III. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman

10. The Committee noted with interest the report on the activities of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman. It commended the dynamism with which the Bureau had performed its duties and, in particular, its active contribution, in cooperation with the secretariat, to the preparation and organization of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee

11. The review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee revealed sharp contrasts in developments in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered in the review, since the Committee's last meeting. While remarkable progress had been achieved in some countries that had once been the scene of armed conflict, persistent tensions, the deteriorating security situation and, very often, the resurgence of armed confrontations were stark reminders that peace was fragile in the countries covered.

12. The humanitarian and human rights situation also continued to be a serious source of concern in several parts of Central Africa.

13. That situation made it imperative for the parties concerned, the other countries of the subregion and the international community to take the necessary steps to bring about national reconciliation, consolidate peace and usher in a new era that would enable peoples who had suffered for too long from the scourge of war to flourish.

14. In accordance with the agenda, the delegations of the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported on the geopolitical and security situation in their respective countries.

15. The Committee also took note of the statement by the delegation of Cameroon describing the geopolitical and security situation in that country.

(i) Republic of Burundi

16. The Committee took note of the formation of a new Government following the reshuffling that took place on 14 November 2007, which made possible the strict application of article 129 of the Constitution, as demanded by some political parties represented in the National Assembly.

17. The Committee condemned the recent attacks perpetrated by the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) against innocent populations in the capital, Bujumbura, in violation of the ceasefire agreement signed on 7 September 2006. The attacks resulted in loss of human life and significant material damage, including damage to the Apostolic Nuncio's residence.

18. The Committee urged the Government, Palipehutu-FNL and all other political actors to give priority to dialogue with a view to finding solutions to all outstanding problems and to take in good faith all steps necessary for the full implementation of the agreement.

19. The Committee launched a new appeal to the international community and to donors to provide Burundi with all the support it needed to tackle the serious socio-economic and security problems it faced.

(ii) Central African Republic

20. The Committee took note with satisfaction of the recent signing at Libreville, on 9 May 2008, of a ceasefire and peace agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD). The agreement was concluded under the auspices of Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, in his capacity as Chairman of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) ad hoc committee on Central African issues and in the presence of Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic.

21. The Committee welcomed the submission of the report of the preparatory committee for the inclusive political dialogue, whose two main characteristics would be the participation of representatives of the armed rebel groups and mediation by a body specializing in conflict resolution, in the interest of neutrality. It encouraged the parties involved to continue making efforts to bring the dialogue to fruition.

22. The Committee also welcomed the developments reflected in the document submitted by the Central African Republic, particularly with regard to the deployment of the European Union operation under the terms of Security Council resolution 1778 (2007).

23. The Committee again expressed deep concern at the persisting insecurity, caused in particular by the ongoing banditry of "roadblockers" in the north of the country, and at acts of violence against civilians. It likewise expressed concern at the presence of Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army elements in the south-east and at the use of that region of the country as a crossing to neighbouring countries.

24. On the issue of human rights, the Committee encouraged the Government to pursue its efforts to combat impunity and reduce the number of extrajudicial killings, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Human Rights Council following his visit to the country.

(iii) Republic of Chad

25. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Chadian delegation concerning the 240,000 Sudanese refugees living in the eastern region of the country and the presence of armed rebel groups among them. It expressed satisfaction at the deployment, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), of a joint United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT)-European Union international force in eastern Chad mandated to provide security to Sudanese refugee camps and humanitarian workers.

26. The Committee also took note of the signing of a non-aggression and peace agreement by the Presidents of Chad and the Sudan on 13 March 2008, under the auspices of the Secretary-General. A contact group had been formed and had held a meeting in Libreville and another in Tripoli in the absence of the Sudanese Head of State.

27. The Committee expressed concern at the deterioration of relations between Chad and the Sudan and called upon both nations to re-establish dialogue, which should facilitate African Union joint mediation efforts and the implementation of the Dakar Agreement. The Committee endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the extraordinary summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government on the situation in Chad, held in Kinshasa in March 2008.

28. In cooperation with Chad, the Committee launched an urgent appeal to the international community to resolve the Darfur crisis, and requested the United Nations to reactivate the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) disarmament project known as "Small Arms Project", which ceased to operate in 2006. It also called for measures to strengthen the capacity of security services in the subregion to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and for the establishment of appropriate border patrol mechanisms in the subregion.

29. The Committee had requested the ECCAS secretariat to produce a report on the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise, in which all States members of the Committee took part. Consideration of the report was deferred to the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

(iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo

30. The Committee welcomed the signature on 23 January 2008, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rebel armed groups, of the Goma statement of commitment (*Acte d'engagement*) and of the Amani programme for peace, pacification, stability and development in the provinces of North and South Kivu; it urged all parties to work in good faith towards the prompt implementation of those texts.

31. The Committee welcomed the round table held in Kinshasa from 18 to 20 February 2008 on security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the start of judicial reform.

32. It also welcomed the Nairobi joint communiqué signed on 9 November 2007 by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, which set out a common approach to ending the threat to peace and stability in both countries and in the Great Lakes region.

33. However, the Committee expressed deep concern at the deteriorating security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the Ituri region, and called upon the armed groups to turn in their weapons and participate unconditionally in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process.

34. The Committee took due note of the information on the deplorable consequences of Mbororo nomad migrations in parts of the eastern province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the Committee endorsed the recommendations made by the African Union fact-finding mission on that issue, in particular on the holding of a meeting of the countries concerned, as soon as possible under the auspices of the African Union, as provided for in the communiqué issued on 11 April 2008 at the 119th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

(v) Republic of Cameroon

35. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Cameroonian delegation on the peace and security situation in that country. It welcomed the fact that the measures taken recently by the Cameroonian authorities to improve the population's purchasing power, particularly the reduction of tariffs on essential commodities and the increase in Government employees' salaries, had significantly contributed to reducing social tensions.

36. It took note of the National Assembly's recent adoption, by a vast majority, of a constitutional amendment introduced by the Government, as well as of Government efforts to combat corruption. The Committee expressed concern at the ongoing criminal activities of "roadblockers" in some border areas in Cameroon, and called upon security forces in that country to continue making efforts to combat that phenomenon, in concert with neighbouring countries. It also welcomed Cameroon's contribution to the deployment of the European Union operation and the Central African Multinational Force in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic.

37. The Committee appealed to bilateral and multilateral donors to provide Cameroon with the support needed to deal with the refugee influx in the north, as a result of developments in Chad. It also called upon donors to provide the necessary support to affected countries and humanitarian organizations in order to ensure that refugees could return promptly to their home countries.

V. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa

(i) Proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and disarmament of civilian populations

38. The Committee noted with interest the information provided by Angola on the situation concerning small arms and light weapons proliferation in that country, as well as on the four-phase civilian disarmament programme launched by the Government.

(ii) Implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative

Code of conduct for Central African defence and security forces

39. The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the preliminary draft code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa.

40. The document submitted contained elements for inclusion in a code of conduct. The document was based on similar drafts prepared by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and, more recently, Togo.

41. However, the Regional Centre made an effort to address a number of characteristics specific to Central Africa that States would continue to supplement as the text was developed.

42. The general principles and guidelines set out in the preliminary draft code of conduct focused primarily on reaffirming the separate roles and responsibilities of the armed forces and security forces in a democratic republic.

43. Those principles were also intended to facilitate dialogue between civilians and the military in a subregion where armed conflicts had eroded the civilian population's trust.

44. Following the presentation, the Committee undertook to transmit its comments to the secretariat along with input for finalizing the code of conduct, with a view to adopting it at the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

Legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

45. With regard to the component of the Sao Tome Initiative on the development and adoption of a legal instrument to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, the Committee noted with satisfaction the presentation of the ECCAS-commissioned study on the methodology that should be considered in order to develop and adopt the legal instrument and its plan of action.

46. The Committee commended the quality of the research conducted by the ECCAS consultant, in the context of its cooperation with the United Nations, in order to effectively develop the legal instrument.

47. Discussions took place on the origins of the Sao Tome Initiative and the methodology adopted and reaffirmed at the Committee's twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth ministerial meetings. According to the planned schedule, the development process should take two years, in order to reflect the conclusion of the work in a United Nations General Assembly resolution adopted at its sixty-fourth regular session.

48. In light of similar instruments developed in other African subregions, as well as global instruments, such as the Vienna Protocol on Firearms, the United Nations Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument on small arms and light weapons, but also given the lack of progress in implementing the programme of priority activities adopted in Brazzaville, the Committee strongly reaffirmed its decision to create a legally binding instrument for the subregion.

49. The discussions also highlighted the importance of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, and of monitoring of the instrument by ECCAS.

50. The Committee welcomed the important advances made in developing the instrument and encouraged its secretariat to provide it with a draft text containing elements drawn from relevant legal instruments.

51. Lastly, the Committee appealed to international partners, and donors in particular, to provide financial support for that initiative, which aimed to promote peace and stability.

(iii) Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons and related issues

52. The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on preparations for the July 2008 biennial meeting on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The biennial meeting would focus in particular on illicit brokering, marking, tracing, stockpile management, assistance and cooperation.

53. The Committee encouraged all States to discuss, at the biennial meeting, the problems they faced and the assistance they needed in implementing the Programme of Action. The Committee also urged States to submit their national reports to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and to clearly convey their financial, material and human resource needs in their statements at the biennial meeting. Indeed, circulating information on States' actual assistance needs would allow their potential partners, including donors and non-governmental organizations, to develop more appropriate assistance programmes.

54. The Committee also took note of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the conduct of three training workshops on the universalization of the International Tracing Instrument on small arms and light weapons. The Central African States had been among those invited to the workshops, which had been financed by the European Union and held from 10 to 11 December 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, and from 17 to 18 April 2008 in Lomé, Togo.

55. Those workshops had given the participants a better understanding of the obligations contained in the Instrument. They had also helped State representatives to determine how and from whom to seek technical assistance. Lastly, the INTERPOL Weapons Electronic Tracing System (IWeTS) simulation had allowed participants to gain practical experience.

56. The Committee noted that the International Tracing Instrument, developed in 2006 in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action, would also be discussed at the biennial meeting. Therefore, the Committee encouraged States to include information on the traceability of small arms and light weapons in their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

57. Furthermore, the Committee took note of the United Nations Security Council meeting held on 30 April 2008 to consider the first report of the Secretary-General to the Council on issues relating to small arms and light weapons (S/2008/258) and the 13 recommendations made in the report. It noted that such meetings would henceforth be held biannually and on the same schedule as the meetings on the

Programme of Action, with the aim of strengthening the synergies between the two mechanisms. In that connection, it expressed its satisfaction with the fact that the Republic of the Congo had informed the Security Council of the Committee's development of a legally binding instrument for Central Africa.

58. Lastly, the Committee also took note of the presentation given by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the training workshops on the universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons held at Lomé from 21 to 25 April 2008. The workshops had been organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa with financial support from the European Union. The Committee strongly encouraged States to ratify that Convention.

(iv) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa

59. The Committee took note of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the implementation in Africa of resolution 1540 (2004), adopted by the Security Council on 28 April 2004, which emphasized efforts to combat terrorism and the use of and trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery by non-State actors.

60. It noted with interest the information on the workshop held in Botswana in November 2007, which had been attended by some Central African countries that had not participated in the 2006 Accra workshop.

61. The Committee also welcomed the Programme of Action developed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its capacity as coordinator of the African Group on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

62. Lastly, the Committee encouraged States to submit their national transparency reports on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

VI. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms

63. The Committee took note of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat on the main activities conducted recently in the areas of peace, security and human integration.

64. It welcomed the progress achieved and the measures taken by ECCAS in the areas of mediation, combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, child protection and human trafficking prevention, promotion and protection of human rights, electoral assistance to member States, crisis prevention and resolution, and operational capacity-building for the Central African Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC).

VII. Report on the activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

65. The Committee took note with interest of the activity report submitted by the Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

66. The Committee commended the broader partnership between the Centre and the States of the subregion, the Centre's increasing visibility and the revitalization of its activities. With regard to the support provided by the Centre to the Governments of the subregion, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the Centre's promotion, protection and follow-up activities on human rights and democracy. It also approved of the Centre's contribution to capacity-building of member States and civil society actors in the areas of human rights and democracy.

67. The Committee reiterated its support for the Centre's activities and expressed a wish for increased collaboration on peace and security in the subregion.

VIII. Date and place of the next meeting

68. The Committee decided to hold its twenty-eighth ministerial meeting in Libreville, Gabonese Republic. The Gabonese delegation informed the Committee that, due to a very busy internal schedule, the Gabonese Republic expected that the twenty-eighth meeting would be held during the first week of September and that the secretariat would be informed of the exact dates later. However, it was agreed that the host country, the Bureau and the secretariat of the Committee should hold consultations to determine the exact date of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

IX. Other matters

69. The Committee once again commended the partnership between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and ECCAS; in that connection, it expressed renewed confidence in ECCAS and requested it to prepare the geopolitical review, an internal document that would provide a basis for discussions on that agenda item during the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. It requested that the document should take States' national contributions into account, clearly cite the information sources used and be circulated to member States not later than two weeks prior to the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

70. The Committee took note of the briefing by the Central African Republic on Mbororo nomad migrations. It also took note of the positions reiterated by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Lastly, it considered the communiqué issued at the 119th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held on 11 April 2008.

71. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Office for Disarmament Affairs regarding the financial difficulties that it faced in organizing the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. It expressed concern at the insufficient resources allocated under the United Nations regular budget, the increase in costs that had had an impact on the organization of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting and the fact that there had been no voluntary contribution to the Committee Trust Fund. It vowed to make every effort to address that situation as soon as possible. It launched an appeal to the international community, with a particular emphasis on its partners, to continue to support the Committee and urged member States to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund in order to enable the Committee to pursue its activities.

72. The Committee decided to include the financial situation issue on the agenda of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting, to be held in Libreville, Gabonese Republic.

73. The Committee took note of the Chairman's statement on the need to streamline the Committee's activities by examining its role and responsibilities. Such collective reflection on the part of the Committee should address in particular its areas of competence and those of the relevant subregional bodies, as well as their composition, their interactions and ways to optimize resource management. The Committee also raised the possibility of further involving potential donors and working to increase the visibility of the Committee's achievements.

74. The Committee decided that a working paper on its origins, mandate, achievements and future prospects should be considered at the Libreville ministerial meeting. It requested the Committee's secretariat to prepare the part of the paper that dealt with its origins, mandate and achievements, and it appointed Cameroon as ad hoc working paper coordinator to prepare the portion on future prospects. To that end, it requested all member States to submit their national contributions to Cameroon, which would incorporate them into the final document to be circulated to States by the Committee secretariat not later than two weeks prior to the meeting.

X. Adoption of the report of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting

75. The Committee adopted the present report on 15 May 2008.

76. The participants commended the propitious atmosphere that had prevailed throughout the meeting. The following expression of thanks was read out:

> "We, the representatives of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, assembled for the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held from 13 to 15 May 2008 in Luanda, Republic of Angola,
>
> Reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of peace, security and stability deeply cherished by our respective peoples and to the socio-economic development of our subregion,
>
> Commend the individual and collective efforts of our countries to achieve peace, security, stability and development,
>
> Welcome the atmosphere of conviviality, brotherhood and mutual trust which has prevailed throughout our work, and
>
> Express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, and to the Government and people of Angola for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality we have received during our stay in Angola."